DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 170 211 SO 011 661

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TITLE Modernization Takes Command: Education in China in the Post-Mao Era.
PUB DATE [9 Apr 79]
NOTE 20p.; Paper presented at Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (San Francisco, California, April 9, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Access to Education; *Comparative Education; Developing Nations; *Economic Development; Economic Progress; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Political Attitudes; *Relationship; Relevance (Education); *Social Change; Social Class; Social Differences; Socialism
IDENTIFIERS *China

ABSTRACT

Changes in the Chinese educational system since the cultural revolution of the 1960s must be analyzed in terms of the contradictory ideals of economic growth and class equality. These two socialist goals are contradictory because to obtain high economic production and growth, certain members of society must be selected and trained for leadership. Class equality cannot be achieved if certain individuals are given better opportunities. Strategies to develop China as a nation have changed over the past 20 years from an emphasis on class equality to an emphasis on economic growth. During the cultural revolution, Mao emphasized the class struggle for equality. As part of the revolution education was made available to the masses, standards were lowered, and higher education was abolished. However, China's current leaders are emphasizing the need for economic growth. By the end of the century they plan to match the levels of advanced nations in areas of agriculture, industry, national defense, and science (education) and technology. As part of the plan, higher education and specialized training are again being encouraged. Education continues to be available to the rural masses, but its quality and content are varied. (AV)

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MODERNIZATION TAKES COMMAND:

EDUCATION IN CHINA IN THE POST-MAO ERA

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Paper presented
At the Annual Meeting
of the
American Educational Research Association
San Francisco, California
April 9, 1979

SP 011 661

Modernization Takes Command:
Education in China in the Post-Mao Era

INTRODUCTION

As Seybolt points out, ostensibly the long-term goal of Marxism in China is the realization of an egalitarian society: "a classless society in which the economic, social and political fruits of human endeavor are distributed on a basis of approximate equality." (1973: xviii) Clearly the first step towards this goal is collective ownership of the means of production, but disparities in wealth, status and power remain. Steps must be taken to reduce and eventually eliminate such inequities.

But there is an additional requirement for the realization of the Marxist ideal society: the production of significant material wealth. An equitable division of an economic pie that guarantees poverty to all does not correspond to the Marxian vision of utopia. Herein lies the rub: is it possible to rapidly increase the material wealth of a poor country and at the same time reduce the major inequalities in that society (e.g., urban/rural, men/women, mental/manual labor)?

This key contradiction, between economic growth and issues of equality, forms a framework which can provide a basis for understanding the controversies surrounding the Chinese educational system in the past twenty years or so. In a socialist society the education system is supposed to democratize society by (a) giving access to education to all regardless of background, (b) developing each individual's potential to the fullest and (c) imbuing each individual with appropriate values, such as cooperation and collective sharing. At the same time the education system is supposed to (a) select the "best" human resources to lead the country, and (b) provide the skills that will lead to the production of more material wealth.

This dual goal structure for education is characteristic of most developing societies, whatever the reality of educational practice. But in socialist societies the possible contradictions arising from the dual goals of equity of educational outcomes and selection of talent are more manifest because of the explicit commitment to egalitarian norms.

In China this dual goal structure is expressed in the phrase "Red and Expert." That is, China sees a need to produce citizens with socialist (hence egalitarian) consciousness, while at the same time developing in these citizens the necessary productive skills to provide significant economic growth. At various times in the past 30 years, there have been major conflicts in the Chinese leadership centered around the issue of which goal (political or productive) takes precedence.

While the education system has been an important focal point for such conflicts, it is important to note that the issues are not educational ones per se. Rather these issues are reflective of more basic differences in China's developmental strategy. This being the case, we begin our analysis with a discussion of the recent shift in China's economic strategy to the program known as the Four Modernizations.

MODERNIZATION REVISITED

> The world has witnessed different roads to modernization. There is capitalist or imperialist modernization and revisionist or social-imperialist modernization. What we want is socialist modernization.
>
> --Hua Kuo-feng, Speech at the National Science Conference, March 24, 1978

Since the inception of the Cultural Revolution, a great deal of attention has been focused on China's developmental strategy. An apparently unique Chinese "model of development" appeared first during the Great Leap Forward, faltered in the early sixties, and emerged full-blown during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Following Frolic (1978) we can briefly identify the key elements in this Chinese model:

-emphasis on developing the countryside

-opposition to rapid urbanization

-maintenance of a lower, more realistic level of industrialization

-more decentralized planning

-emphasis on moral as opposed to material incentives

-more focus on the superstructure (values) than on the base (economic system)

-emphasis on politicization (class struggle) as opposed to "production in command"

(adapted from Frolic, 1978: 385)

For a variety of reasons, not the least its promise as an alternative to the modernization paradigm, this Chinese experiment in development captured the imagination of many western social scientists. For

some, then, an interest was engendered, at least in part, by the possibility of replicating the Chinese model in Third World countries (Keesing, 1975; Weisskopf, 1976; Gurley, 1976). Even while acknowledging its limited potential for replication, these authors, and others, found a great deal to be admired in the Chinese economic strategies that were strongly associated with the leadership of Mao Tse-tung:

> By the mid-seventies we had received a great deal of positive (and resoundingly uncritical) information about how China effectively had solved problems of rural underdevelopment, the emancipation of women, pollution, over-urbanization, unemployment, elitism, bureaucracy, unequal growth patterns, motivation and overdependency on external assistance. (Frolic, 1978: 386)

In a similar vein, analysts such as Peck (1975) attempted to demonstrate that the Chinese approach represented an ideological alternative to both the modernization paradigm on the one hand and Soviet "revisionism" on the other:

> Sixteen years after Liberation, the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution was launched partly to shatter what remained of China's reliance on the Soviet model. Yet underlying this seemingly striking shift in China's development was an ideology that had grown out of a century of revolutionary struggle--what Mao in the late 1950's spoke of as "uninterrupted revolution"...Like modernization theory and the Soviet conception of socialism, it is an ideology, a way both of understanding, and of justifying certain goals and the methods appropriate to realize them. (Peck, 1975: 58-59)

In advocating "socialist modernization," Chairman Hua Kuo-feng seems to be making a similar distinction. Yet in light of the interest in the Chinese model of the previous decade, the use of the term modernization strikes us as highly ironic. At a time when many Western and Third World social scientists have criticized, rejected, and/or attempted to

modify the "modernization paradigm" (see critiques such as Goulet, 1971; Berger, 1976; Pratt, 1973; Rogers, 1975; and Frank, 1972), in China we find "modernization" enshrined. A term that has come to have pejorative connotations in revisionist social science circles[1] is now enthusiastically espoused in post-Liberation China.

The details behind this shift from revolutionary to modernization language for China's leadership has been described elsewhere (see e.g., Harding, 1977; Starr, 1978). In brief, the new course, officially referred to as the New Long March, aims to make China a "fully modern socialist state" by the year 2000. In 1975, apparently under the direction of Premier Chou En-lai and Vice-Premier Teng Hsiao-p'ing, a series of documents were drafted to set down basic guidelines for a program of modernization. With Teng's fall from power that same year, these documents were discredited. Labeled by the Gang of Four as "three poisonous weeds," the documents included a "General Program of Work for the Whole Party," an outline report on the work of the Academy of Sciences, and a 20-point discussion of problems in speeding up industrial development (Starr, 1978: 32). With the reinstatement of Teng in 1977 after the fall of the Gang of Four, the documents were likewise rehabilitated, and became the basis of the new policy, summarized under the slogan of the "four modernizations."

The "four modernizations" in agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology are efforts to rapidly develop these areas. The goal is to match the levels of the more advanced nations in each of these areas by the end of the century. Moreover, "modernization of science (and education related to it) is central to the success of the other three." (Kerr et al, 1979: 2)

I have puzzled at some length over the current Chinese usage of the concept of modernization, and its potential relationship to the large body of western literature on the subject. Nash (1963) identified three basic approaches by social scientists to the conceptualization of modernization: (1) the acculturation or diffusionist view, which emphasizes a process of "westernization;" (2) the psychological approach, which emphasizes the acquisition of certain social psychological requisites of "modernity" by individuals; and (3) the ideal index approach, in which the general features of a developed economy are abstracted as an ideal type and then contrasted with the equally typical features of a poor economy and society.[2] Modernization, in this view, becomes the transition from one ideal type to the other.

Analytically, the Chinese concept of modernization is closest to the ideal index approach, albeit in a somewhat limited fashion. They have identified a number of indicators from the advanced societies in four key areas: agriculture, industry, national defense, and science and technology. Using these indicators, which are primarily economic in nature, as a guide, China's leaders intend to close the "gap" between China and the advanced societies by the turn of the century. This is hardly an original conceptualization of modernization, then, and is not likely to capture the imagination of either Western or Third World analysts of development.

> ...the trends are obvious: away from 'uniqueness' and towards comprehensibility in terms of a modernizing model with which we are more familiar. What had been presented as a new method of modernizing, in which growth is more balanced because it is focused on social rather than on economic imperatives, becomes at best a

> minor amendment to our common (capitalist and socialist) modernization process. (Frolic, 1978: 414)

According to Nash's typology, in strictly analytic terms it puts the Chinese leadership in the exalted company of such structural functionalists as Parsons, Levy, and Hoselitz. Modernization, it seems, also makes strange bedfellows.

THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN TWO LINES

Admittedly, this point is somewhat unfair. China's leaders have goals beyond economic growth. After all, Chairman Hua calls for "socialist modernization." China's leaders still talk of the Three Great Revolutionary Movements or struggles: the class struggle, the struggle for production, and the struggle for scientific production. But where Mao argued that class struggle was to be taken as the "key link," we are now told that the three struggles are now to be regarded as of equal importance and as inextricably interconnected (Starr, 1978: 32).

In effect, if not in rhetoric, the policy of the four modernizations has made the struggle for production the "key link" today. Moreover, it is around this issue of the relative emphasis on class struggle versus production that we find the basic differences between the Chinese model of the late sixties and the current policy formulation. This is not a new conflict among Chinese leaders. Known as the "two-line struggle," it is traceable at least as far back as 1957. The history of this two-line struggle has been well-documented elsewhere (see, for example, Kung, 1975). Harding (1978), using a minimum of Marxist-Leninist terminology, summarizes the two lines as follows:

> Most generally, they (the Chinese leaders) can be differentiated by the relative priorities that are assigned to two important but competitive goals: economic development (what the Chinese call 'production') and socio-economic equality (what the Chinese call 'revolution' or 'class struggle'). In China, the 'rightist' or 'moderate' position has been to emphasize economic modernization, to argue that institutional and political stability is a necessary prerequisite for rapid economic development, to accept a degree of social and economic inequality for the sake of economic efficiency, and to believe that progress toward a communist society requires a protracted period of economic growth. The 'leftist' or 'radical' position, has been to stress the need to 'continue the revolution,' to question both the necessity and the desirability of the emergence of an intellectual or economic elite, to argue that constant struggle and even political disorder is necessary to prevent the emergence of 'revisionism' in China, and to believe that preliminary steps toward communism can and should be taken even at relatively low levels of economic development. (Harding, 1978: 83)

In sum, while China's leaders may share the goals of economic growth and socio-economic equality, they differ strongly over the priorities they see in relationship to these two sometimes competing goals. The Maoist approach emphasized class struggle and the transformation of the superstructural elements of a society as a basis for socialist economic development. This strategy is sometimes encapsulated in the slogan, "Politics Takes Command." China's current leaders, led by Teng Hsiao-p'ing, emphasize the need for expansion of the economic base as the fundamental prerequisite for socialist development. While the need for class struggle is not entirely dismissed, it is clearly de-emphasized. While no such slogan exists in China (and in deference to Mao probably never will), we might well say that "Modernization (or production) Takes Command" in today's China.

While this notion of "Production in Command" was bitterly criticized by Mao and his followers in the sixties, it is currently the dominant line. This is not to say, however, that the current policy has completely obliterated the elements of the Maoist model of the late sixties. It is the shift in the priority--the "key link"--which is significant. And any discussion of current educational policies in China must be framed by an understanding of this basic shift in developmental strategy.

THE TWO-LINE STRUGGLE IN EDUCATION: RED VERSUS EXPERT

In broad terms, the Chinese generally identify two basic goals for their educational system: (1) to create good socialist citizens, and (2) to link education to production. These are not remarkable goals. Except for the particular context which socialism provides, it is difficult to imagine a contemporary society which does not want to create "good" citizens on the one hand, and to inculcate productive skills on the other. In simple terms, the former represents primarily the political aim of education, and the latter, primarily economic. As we have seen above, the potential contradiction between political versus economic imperatives has created major conflicts in China for at least twenty years. Mao attempted to resolve this contradiction in the concept of "red and expert:"

> The relationship between redness and expertness, between politics and work, stands for the unity of two opposites. It certainly is necessary to criticize and repudiate the tendency to ignore politics. It is necessary to oppose the armchair politician on the one hand and the practicalist who has gone astray on the other.

> There is no question that politics is unified with economics and technique... This is called red and expert. (Mao Tsetung, 1958, quoted in Chen, 1974: 218-219)

Utilizing this framework, the goal of the educational system becomes the production of graduates who are both red and expert.

In practice this ideal has proven considerably difficult to achieve. As was most dramatically demonstrated during the Cultural Revolution when schooling was interrupted for two years or more, the education system has been a crucial battleground for the two competing visions of Chinese society. More than a "unity of opposites," the education system has resembled a pendulum swinging between the two contrasting poles of red and expert. The "red" or Maoist pole has been well described elsewhere (Hawkins, 1974; Seybolt, 1973). Chen (1974) summarizes the Maoist educational line as follows:

> -The educational revolution is opposed to elitist education; its program is mass-oriented.
>
> -The Maoist line is opposed to knowledge for its own sake, education for its own sake, art and literature for their own sake; all must be guided by politics and economics.
>
> -Mao taught the unity of theory and practice. In education, the study of theory must be linked with its application to the political and economic (production) struggle.
>
> - Examinations and marks should be dethroned.
>
> -Full-time study alienated students from labor and production; study should go hand-in-hand with production and participation in the political (class) struggle.
>
> -Intellectuals must be reformed by labor and learn to identify themselves with the laboring class. They must be aware of the class nature of all educational and cultural work.
>
> -Workers and peasants must be educated to become a new force of proletarian intelligentsia.
>
> (Chen, 1974: 35)

With the fall of the Gang of Four and the reinstatement of Teng Hsiao-p'ing, the educational perdulum has swung again. In April, 1978, a National Educational Work Conference was called in Peking, and a draft program for national education from 1978 to 1985 was presented by Liu Hsi-yao, Minister of Education. Excerpts from Teng Hsiao-p'ing's speech at the conference gives an indication of the change in educational priorities:

> There is no doubt that schools should always attach primary importance to a firm and correct political orientation. This, however, does not mean devoting many classroom hours to ideological and political education...
>
> We encourage everyone to strive for progress, but progress depends, after all, on whether the individual makes the effort. A collective effort is the sum of individual efforts. There will be differences in individual efforts in communist society. Chairman Mao once said that ten thousand years from now there will still be a gap between the advanced and the backward. Therefore, while encouraging and helping everyone to work hard, we have to admit the disparity in the abilities and moral qualities of different people...
>
> From now on, not only secondary schools and colleges must make an overall examination of the applicants on their moral, intellectual and physical levels and enroll only those who are outstanding, various departments should do likewise and in increasing their workforce, give priority to those who are outstanding. (Teng, 1978)

THE FOUR MODERNIZATIONS AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY: WHOM SHALL EDUCATION SERVE?

There are a plethora of issues to be found in the new educational policies presented in the 1978 draft program: control of the schools, teaching personnel, teaching methods, curriculum, student discipline, etc. Underlying all these issues, and raised forcefully in Teng's speech, is

the fundamental question of education for whom? The policy of the Four Modernizations places clear and direct pressures on education in this regard: A former chancellor of the University of California had no trouble identifying this:

> One great necessity for modernization is the creation of skilled personnel, scientists, teachers and the like. China has a very thin formally educated group of highly trained personnel. It lost nearly ten full years of advanced training from 1966 to 1976. Today, within higher education, China has only one student to every 100 in the United States, after adjusting for size of the respective populations. If modernization is to be successful, China must create as rapidly as possible vast numbers of skilled personnel, and it is making new efforts to find and develop talent throughout Chinese society. (Kerr et al, 1978: 2)

If the key link in Chinese society is production, then the key link in education is quality or talent. According to the Minister of Education,

> At present, the key link is to raise the quality of education. It is imperative to bring into full play the important role of higher education in raising quality and training qualified persons, while laying a good foundation through attending earnestly to middle and primary school education. (Liu, 1978: 2)

This emphasis on the role of higher education is instructive.[3] The educational model of the Cultural Revolution de-emphasized higher education because of its inherently elite nature. Entrance exams were abolished, and political and class background criteria were utilized in the admission process. Two years of work experience in the countryside or a factory was required for university entrance, along with the recommendation of one's work group. The length of higher education was reduced, and the time spent in productive labor by students increased, amounting to as much as six months of a three-year program.

Since the fall of the Gang of Four, most of these policies have been modified or revised. The entrance examinations have been

re-instated. The college term has been lengthened (though not necessarily to pre-Cultural Revolution standards). An increasing percentage of students are admitted directly to higher education without work experience. The amount of productive labor by students has been curtailed, and a greater emphasis has been put on theoretical knowledge. Graduate education has been resumed. Certain institutions of higher education have been designated as "key point" schools and will receive better staffing, equipment and funding.

Even in an area which has changed as dramatically as higher education, it is important to note that the current changes have not been such to create an identical situation to 1965. The worker and agricultural colleges remain. Correspondence programs are being extended. The Ministry of Education intends to offer a college degree via educational TV. While productive labor has been reduced, it is still part of the curriculum.

The point here is that while higher education has shifted again towards education of the elite, it is not as if the Cultural Revolution had never occurred. The leadership hopes to create an essentially dual system: (a) a selective system for the "talented;" and (b) an open access system for the "masses." At the same time they intend to greatly expand higher education opportunities in both sectors.

"SOCIALIST MODERNIZATION" AND EDUCATION: A CONCLUDING NOTE

From our brief discussion of higher education, a highly sensitive area for the new leadership, we can begin to speculate on an emerging pattern for socialist modernization, and a corresponding import on education. In adopting the Four Modernizations' approach, the Chinese have necessarily reduced the distance between their own developmental strategies and those of the Soviet Union. We do not mean to imply a rapprochement between the two super powers. However, because of the Cultural Revolution and the political constraints imposed by that experiment, we are unlikely to see the excesses of a Stalinist-type modernization program. Rather the effort seems to focus on mobilizing the country around the notion of economic growth, with an underlying appeal to nationalism reminiscent of the United Front period of the late 1930's (Starr, 1978: 31). In an United Front period, you do not emphasize class struggle, especially at the expense of winning the war.

While the struggle for modernization is being waged, certain inequalities will remain and perhaps grow. The leadership sees this as a short-run situation until the productive forces of society have generated an economic growth on a scale to permit the reduction of such inequities.

These same patterns will be reflected in education. The struggle for modernization calls on the nation to utilize the best talent available, including those formerly tainted as "bourgeois." What about the inequalities fostered in a system tailored to the "talented?" For the "losers" in the selection process (or the masses) there will be expanded opportunities to enter parallel education institutions of easy access,

Here some of the institutions created during the Cultural Revolution will serve the Chinese well, the workers' colleges and the like. The educational functions of the media will greatly expanded as well.

It would be naive to presume that such mass educational institutions will provide the Chinese with a "parallel but equal" system. On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether this dualistic system will produce a "new class" which will bring to fruition Mao's worst fears; or whether, in fact, the Chinese can tread a fine line between socialism and modernization which in the long run will allow them to realize both goals.

FOOTNOTES

[1] By "revisionist social scientists' I mean those who are critical of the dominant paradigms in the field of development. There is no connection between this usage and the Maoist use of the term "revisionism."

[2] I have used the Nash article because the simplicity of the typology he presents and its easy application to the present case. For a more complete typology, including Marxism, see Havens (1972).

[3] The remarks in this section are drawn largely from my notes from two trips to China in October/November, 1974, and May/June, 1978. In June, 1978, I participated in two meetings with Ministry of Education officials, including Vice-Minister Pu Tung-Hsin.

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